(c) The economic cost of wheat and rice is as under:

Rate Rs./Qtls.

Year	Wheat	Rice
2000-01	829.64	1148.07
2001-02	871.30	1204.35
2002-03	891.73	1223.17

Paddy farmers in Orissa

221. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the paddy farmers of Jeypore Sub-division of Orissa, have been facing harassment at the hands of officials responsible for procurement of paddy and the farmers have been forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices, as reported in the New Indian Express dated the 30th December, 2002; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to direct the FCI officials to procure paddy at the fixed rates?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) The State Government has reported that it is not a fact that the paddy farmers of Jeypore Sub-division of Orissa have been facing harassment at the hands of officials responsible for collection of paddy and the farmers have been forced to sell their produce at throwaway prices. It has further been reported that 20,000 MTs of paddy has already been purchased in Jeypore Sub-division by the miller agents appointed by the State Government on payment of MSP.

(b) The FCI has opened 20 paddy purchase centres in 6 Revenue Districts of Orissa during the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 to extend the benefits of MSP to the farmers. Instructions have been issued to the FCI to ensure that necessary proof/documents are obtained from the millers at the time of procurement of levy rice to ensure that the benefit of MSP/special drought relief price has been passed on to the farmers.